

Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 29 Issue 710

Was Jesus Christ Alive Before His Cife on Earth Began?

Part 4 of 12

by — Aaron Welch

A Consideration of Passages Thought to Reveal the "Preexistence of Christ"

Paul's Letters to the Body of Christ

I CORINTHIANS 10:1-4

For I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, that our fathers all were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all are baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of the spiritual rock which followed. Now the rock was Christ.

In a Nutshell:

The "rock" that Paul had in view was the rock at Horeb, from which water miraculously flowed for the Israelites in the wilderness. When Paul wrote that this rock "was Christ," he was using the same sort of figure of speech as that used by Christ when, during the last supper, He said (concerning the bread), "This is My body." Paul was, in other words, speaking metaphorically here.

Expanded Explanation:

In these verses Paul was referring to the desert wanderings of the Israelites after the exodus. The "spiri-

heaven that was miraculously provided for them. Corresponding to this "spiritual" (although completely tangible) food is the "spiritual drink" that the Israelites drank from a certain "spiritual rock." This "spiritual drink" is a reference to the water that miraculously flowed from the rock at Horeb

that Moses struck with his staff on two separate occasions (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 8:15; Isaiah 48:21).

Thus, when Paul wrote of "the spiritual rock which followed" in I Corinthians 10:4, he was alluding to the literal rock at Horeb from which water miraculously flowed. This literal rock was said by Paul to be "spiritual" in the same sense that the manna that fell from Heaven and the water which flowed from the rock are said to have been "spiritual."

In speaking of the rock as following the Israelites, Paul was likely using a figure of speech called metonymy, with the rock standing for the water that sprang forth from the rock. Commentator Adam Clarke (who was a Trinitarian and believed in the pre-existence of Christ) remarked on this verse,

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How could the rock follow them? It does not appear that the rock ever moved from the place where Moses struck it. But to solve this difficulty, it is said that rock here is put, by metonymy, for the water of the rock; and that this water did follow them through the wilderness. This is more likely, but we have not direct proof of it. The ancient Jews, however, were of this opinion and state that the streams followed them in all their journeyings, up the mountains, down the valleys, etc.; and that when they came to encamp, the waters formed themselves into cisterns and pools; and that the rulers of the people guided them, by their staves, in rivulets to the different tribes and families. And this is the sense they give to Numbers 21:17: Spring up, O well, etc.

It should also be noted that Paul doesn't say that the rock provided them with water for their entire journey. While he does say the rock "followed them," this doesn't necessarily have to be understood to mean that the water from the rock followed them for their entire journey.

Of course, it's possible that God actually caused streams of water from the rock to follow the Israelites miraculously for the entirety of their journey in the desert. However, the word translated "followed" could also mean "accompanied." Understood in this way, the water from the rock accompanied them in the sense that they carried it with them in their journey through the wilderness (i.e., in skin-bottles or some other vessels that were used by ancient near eastern people in that day).

In any case, it can be reasonably concluded that Paul understood this rock to have typified Christ, and it was for this reason that he said the rock "was Christ."

The rock at Horeb was not literally Christ; rather, it was like Christ in some way, and can be understood as having represented Him. The figure of speech used by Paul is the same as that used by Christ during the last supper when he said of the bread, "This is my body." Paul was, in other words, speaking metaphorically. Even for those who believe in the pre-existence of Christ, one would think that this would be somewhat obvious (does anyone who holds to the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence really believe that a certain

celestial being who would later become incarnated as Christ was disguising Himself as a rock in the wilderness?). Then again, I suppose that it should not be all that surprising if some did really believe this. After all, millions of Christians mistakenly continue to believe that when they partake of the "Eucharist" they're literally consuming Christ's body.

In what way can the rock at Horeb be considered a "type" of Christ, or to be like Christ in some way? Like the rock at Horeb that was "struck" or "smitten" by Moses for the sake of Israel during her wilderness wanderings (Exodus 17:6), it was prophesied that Christ would also be "struck" or "smitten" for our sakes (Isaiah 53:4-5, 10; Zechariah 13:7). Just as water came forth from the rock at Horeb after it was struck, so we're told that water (along with blood) came out of Christ's side when, after dying on the cross, he was pierced by a Roman soldier (John 19:34). We also know that, figuratively speaking, Christ's death resulted in "living water" becoming available to those who believed on Him (John 4:10-14; 7:37-38; cf. Revelation 21:6).

II CORINTHIANS 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being rich, because of you He became poor, that you, by His poverty, should be rich.

In a Nutshell:

When Paul wrote of Christ's becoming "poor" so that the saints in Corinth to whom he wrote "should be rich," he had in view Christ's sacrificial death on mankind's behalf. Christ's death - an essential element of Paul's evangel - was the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" of which the saints to whom Paul wrote already had knowledge (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Expanded Explanation:

Some who believe in the preexistence of Christ assume that the words "being rich" imply a pre-existent state, and that Christ's becoming "poor" should be understood as referring to his "incarnation" (since Christ was, of course, born into a state of poverty).

However, this is not the only (nor, I believe, the best)

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way of understanding Paul's words here. The saints to whom Paul wrote weren't made "rich" simply by virtue of Christ's being conceived and born into this world (which is what the "preexistence" interpretation of this verse would entail). Rather, their becoming "rich" (which, of course, was not a reference to whatever material wealth they may or may not have had) was the result of Christ's death for their sins.

To be "rich" is to be in possession of something that is of great value, and for someone who is rich subsequently to become "poor" (as Paul said happened to Christ) is for them to give away, or be deprived of, that which belonged to them which was of such great value. So what was it that Christ gave away which was of such great value, and which (by giving it up) made Him "poor," and placed Him in a state of "poverty"? I believe Christ Himself answered this question for us:

But whosoever may be wanting to become great among you, let him be your servant, and whoever may be wanting to be foremost among you, let him be your slave, even as the Son of Mankind came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His soul a ransom for many (Matthew 20:26-28).

That which Christ gave up – and which was of such great intrinsic value that it could be given as a "ransom for many" (and indeed for "all mankind," as Paul would later write in I Timothy 2:6) – was his very "soul," or self (the word "soul" is often used in Scripture in reference to one's entire being, or self, considered as the subject of sentience/consciousness). For our sakes, Christ gave all that He had to give – His very self – as a sacrifice to God. For three days, the One Who had previously enjoyed unbroken communion with His God and Father was lifeless and in

a state of utter destitution.

The same idea found in Matthew 20:28 was, I believe, expressed by Christ in parable form elsewhere:

Like is the kingdom of the heavens to a treasure hidden in the field, finding which, a man hides it, and, in his joy, is going away, and is selling all, whatever he has, and is buying that field. Again, like is the kingdom of the heavens to a man, a merchant, seeking ideal pearls. Now, finding one very precious pearl, he comes away, having disposed of all whatever he had, and buys it (Matthew 13:44-46).

Concerning these parables, A.E. Knoch wrote,

In order to possess Himself of the treasures, the Son of Mankind gives His all and purchases the world. He has overpaid its price by His blood.

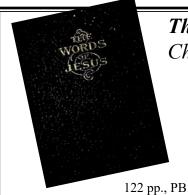
Knoch went on to remark that Christ – Who He interprets as being the "merchant" of the parable – "gave up all His riches to purchase [the very precious pearl] for Himself." Christ truly "disposed of all whatever he had" when, in obedience to God, He laid down His own "soul" (his own sentient self, or being) – something which Peter elsewhere affirmed as "precious" (I Peter 1:19; 2:7).

(to be continued)

About the Author, see part 1, <u>Bible Student's Notebook #707</u>, page 6077.

TOPICS:

Major: Jesus Christ (Pre-Existence of); Trinity



The Words of Jesus: As Recorded in the New Testament, Chronologically Arranged With Dates and Places of Interest

by — Albert Hallett

First published in 1904, this work arranges the words of Jesus in the Gospels in chronological order under separate headings which provide the person to whom they were spoken, the place and date, down to the day of the month by then modern calculation.

See order form.





Reader's Question Box #23

The Worship of Christ

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

I recently purchased the publication No • Equals¹ from your web site and just wanted to say that I thoroughly enjoyed it. I have held the same belief since I was 14 years of age: that Jehovah is no part of a Trinity and Jesus Christ is His Son and our Savior. I have considered a lot of material on the subject and clearly see that such a teaching has its foundation in the worship of other gods and peoples. It was nice to consider the same subject from a fresh perspective. The reasonings were sound and made sense – a joy to read.

There was just one thing that I need your help with if I may. On page 27 it says, "we give Jesus Christ all the worship, credit, respect and awe that He deserves"; this same thought is again expressed in the last paragraph on page 48.

I am not sure if I correctly understand the author's expression as he intended and thus am seeking some clarity. In what way is the expression "worship" meant in this instance?

If the Father alone is God and the son was created and thus submissive to our God, then is not all worship to be given to the Father? I have always under-

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stood that to give "worship" to any creation rather than the creator would be a matter of idolatry. That being said, I appreciate that my thinking may not be in harmony with the author and my understanding of what is meant by the term worship may vary from his.

I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter to assist me with a little clarity on the subject. Again may I express my thanks for the book No Equals; it was a pleasure to read. – J.F., Australia

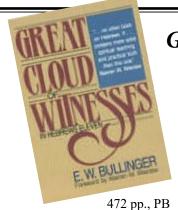
Our English word "worship" is defined in the • American Dictionary of the English Language (Noah Webster, 1828) as:

WORSHIP, n. [See Worth.]

1. Excellence of character; dignity; worth; worthi-

We learn here that the original root meaning of "worship" is "worth." The suffix "-ship" is used to form state or condition nouns. Thus, "worship" is "worthship" – the state of worth, or condition of having value.

Among Webster's many other variant definitions of



Great Cloud of Witnesses in Hebrews Chapter 11

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

A great classic exposition of this famous and beloved passage, including an examination of the greatest heroes of the faith. Full of rich, practical applications.

See order form.

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"worship" he supplies "Honor; respect." His listing for "worship" as a "verb" is:

WORSHIP, v.t.

1. To adore ... 2. To respect; to honor ...

Our English word "worthship" is therefore very broad. As children, we "honor" (to use Webster's definition of worship) our parents, and thus could be said to "worship" them. As husbands we "adore and respect" (again to use Webster's definitions) our wives, and thus could also be said to "worship" them as well.

Concerning this last example, in the centuries-old English wedding vows the groom promised to "love, cherish, and *worship*" his bride, and more pointedly to repeat the promise that "with my body I thee *worship*."

Therefore, we can see that in English we can properly use the word "worship" in quite a wide sense. Not only could we use it of parents and wives but much more importantly of God. No doubt; in our examples of parents and wives having worth, how much more worth does God have? Obviously, in a far greater measure – the ultimate measure – God is uniquely, exceptionally, exclusively "worthy" – alone – in a class of worship all by Himself.

So, in a *relative* way, there may be those among God's creation rightfully deserving of having value placed upon them (*i.e.*, of being "worshipped"). That is, again to use Webster's definition of our English word worship, deserving of respect and honor. However,

in an *absolute* sense, there is *NONE* worthy of "worth-ship" like Elohim.

In other words, we "worthship" our parents by recognizing and responding to the worth of their God-given role as our parents; and we "worthship" our wives recognizing and responding to the worth of their God-given role as our wives; however, we "worthship" God in recognizing and responding to HIS own innate, intrinsic worth as "All in all" – the Almighty: All-encompassing, Sovereign of all Creation!

Now, let's take a look at the Greek words translated "worship." There are actually some 10 Greek words that the King James Version, for example, translates as "worship" (or "worshipped," "worshippeth," "worshipping," "worshippers," along with other English words) representing some 76 instances. These Greek words are represented by the following Strong's numbers G4352^{60x}, G4576^{5x}, G3000^{4x}, G1391^{1x}, G1479^{1x}, G2151^{1x}, G2323^{1x}, G2356^{1x}, G4573^{1x}; G4574^{1x}.

Of these 10 Greek words one stands out prominently as being the source of 60 translations of "worship." It is the Greek word $\pi\rho\sigma\kappa\nu\nu\epsilon\omega$ (proskuneō, G4352).

Thayer's Lexicon defines proskuneō as: "to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence" stating that "among the Orientals, especially the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence," while "in the New Testament by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication."

Spirit Manifestations and the Gift of Tongues

by — Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918)

In a day of extravagant claims of the miraculous workings of the Spirit every believer must be prepared to evaluate these claims and determine reasonable expectations regarding the work of the Spirit in his or her own life. The author, a noted apologist, considers history and searches the Scriptures to determine what is of God and what is of the great deceiver.

56 pp., PB "Sir Robert speaks the words of wisdom, and those who heed them will find them a trusty guide in these 'perilous times." – Dr. E.W. Bullinger

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Strong's Greek Dictionary also shows that proskuneō (G4352) is a "probable derivative of [κύων, kuōn] G2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand)," while giving the meaning as, "to fawn or crouch to, that is, (literally or figuratively) prostrate

oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore)." It is this Greek word proskuneo that Jesus used in

Matthew 4:10 for the "worship" of God.

Then saith Jesus unto him, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship [proskuneo] the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Thus, clearly "worship" (proskuneō, respect; honor) is the *only* appropriate recognition and response towards God to declare His worth and glory "as God." (Romans 1:21). However, to "worship" Him merely as one would parents, or as one would wives, would be to fall short of the "glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Conversely, to honor and respect our parents or wives "as God," would be idolatry.

God Is Worshipped

So, we see then in the Greek Scriptures that God is "worshipped."

- Thou shalt worship [proskuneo] the Lord thy God (Matthew 4:10).
- ... worship [proskuneō] the Father (John 4:21)
- ... worship [proskuneō] the Father ... worship [proskuneo] Him (John 4:23)
- ... worship [proskuneō] Him (John 4:24)
- ... worship [proskuneō] God (I Corinthians 14:25). Etc.

Jesus, God's Son, Is Also Worshipped

Based on all we have considered thus far, we should not then be surprised to learn that the Greek Scriptures also see that Christ is being "worshipped," using the EXACT same Greek word – *proskune*ō – that it use for the "worship" of God.

- The "wise men" came "to worship [proskuneō] Him" and "worshipped [proskuneo] Him" (Matthew 2:2, 11).
- "A leper" "worshipped [proskuneo] Him" (Matthew 8:2).
- "A certain ruler" "worshipped [proskuneō] Him" (Matthew 9:18).
- "A woman of Canaan" "worshipped [proskuneō] Him" (Matthew 15:25).
- "The eleven" "worshipped [proskuneo] Him" (Matthew 28:17: Luke 24:52).
- "All the angels of God [proskuneō] worship Him" (Hebrews 1:6), etc.

All true worship of Jesus Christ, as with other of God's creatures, is in recognition of Who God has made Him to be. Like our examples of parents and wives, Christ is "worshipped" in truth only as He is recognized and responded to in the worth of His God-given role as Lord and Savior, King of kings, Head of the Body of Christ and of the New Creation, etc. This is the appropriate value and honor that God has placed upon Him.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the *glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:9-11).

Misplaced Worship

So, as already addressed, to value and honor anyone as we should God would be idolatrous. This is the thrust of the "worship restriction" passages found in the Scripture. Let's consider only two examples of them.

When Paul brought his historical indictment against humanity in Romans 1, he declared that they had,

... changed the truth of God into a lie, and wor-

shipped and served the creature **MORE THAN** the Creator (:25)

The charge wasn't that they merely "worshipped and served the creature," but that they did so "more than" the Creator. The indictment was that of misplaced worship and service. Surely, children are to "honor" (Ephesians 3:6) and "serve" (Galatians 4:1) their creature-parents, just as husbands are to "love and cherish" their creature-wives, serving them with self-sacrifice (Ephesians 5:25-33). However, this love, honor and service are never to be "more than the Creator."

The words "more than" are but a single Greek word: $\pi\alpha\rho\dot{\alpha}$ (para, G3844). The meaning provided by Strong's Greek Dictionary is "near ... in the vicinity ... especially beyond" and is also translated in the King James Version, among other things, as "above," and "before." Bullinger defines it as "along the side of, beside, compared with."

One more passage for consideration is,

Thou shalt have no other gods **BEFORE** Me (Exodus 20:3).

Or, as the Concordant Literal Version renders it,

You shall not come to have other elohim in **preference** to Me.

The Hebrew word for "before" in this passage is על

(al, H5921). Strong's defines it as "above, over, upon, or against," whole Brown-Driver-Briggs provides "beside, in addition to, together with."

Both the Hebrew ('ĕlôhîym) and the Greek (*theos*) words for "god" are terms of authority and rulership position. Interestingly, Jesus' referenced Hebrew Scripture passages where *The God* called Israel "*gods*" (*i.e.* rulers).

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, **Ye are gods?"** (John 10:34).

Christ was referring to two Hebrew Scripture passages:

I have said, "Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalm 82:6).

Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that **ye are gods** (Isaiah 41:23).

The idea was that Israel was to be "gods," or have the governmental position of authority (or rulership) over the Gentiles (or Nations). Israel was to hold the office of "gods" (or 'ĕlôhîym), however, Israel was not *The God* ('Ĕlôhîym), but mere under-"gods" originating from Him, and holding a position of His placement.

Paul also wrote.



by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

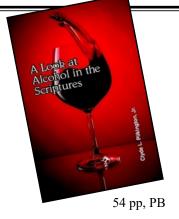
[God brings forth] wine which makes man's heart glad (Psalm 104:15).

Wine was a blessing in Scripture (Proverbs 3:10), something to be received gratefully from God (Psalm 104:15). Like many things that God has graciously given to man, alcohol can be used or abused.

However, it is important that we do not confuse use with abuse, or drinking with drunkenness. To prohibit the use of alcohol, by pointing to verses about its abuse, would be like condemning the eating of food because of gluttony, or requiring

sexual abstinence because of carnal sins. This is deceptive and erroneous religious reasoning.

This study briefly surveys alcohol related Hebrew and Greek words and some of their contexts, considers passages usually used to condemn the use of alcohol, and looks at a few common objections.



See order form.

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For though there be that are called gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him (I Corinthians 8:5-6).

So, we see that Paul also addressed the issue of these under-authorities of divine rulership. According to Paul, these little "gods" (or authorities) and minor "lords" (or masters) "in Heaven or in Earth" are "many." They are, of course, only relative, underauthorities of the innate Godhood of The 'Elôhîym. Thus, Paul goes on to say that there is only one absolute God – Who is the Father – and that there is only one ultimate under-Lord – Jesus the Christ.

Jesus Worshiped, but Not as God, the Father

So, though both the Greek Scriptures and their English translations attribute "worship" to the Christ, this does not in any way suggest that Jesus is *THE GOD* of Scripture. Though the Christ is "worshipped" by Thomas as "god" (i.e., "Thomas answered and said unto Him, 'my lord and my god" John 20:28), Jesus the Christ, nonetheless, also Himself is said to have a "God," both before and after His resurrection.

... *My God*, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (Matthew 27:46).

Here the Christ uses the Greek word θεός (*Theos*, G2316), referencing Psalm 22:1 where the Hebrew word is (El, H410).

Other references to the Christ and His God are:

I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to **My God**, and your God (John 20:17).

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God ... and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God ... (Revelation 3:12).

Jesus, *just like us*, has a God, while, on the other hand, The Father has no God.

There is no God else beside Me (Isaiah 45:21).



Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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bsn@studyshelf.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor André Sneidar – Managing Editor Keith Martin – Associate Editor

Managers and Assistants

Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Nathan H. Pilkington, Janet L. Maher, Stephen Hill, Aaron Locker, Cindy Pilkington, Nadine Sneidar

For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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ABBREVIATION KEY

Scripture Version

CV: Concordant Literal Version

DAR: Darby Translation DT: Dabhar Translation FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible KJV: King James Version **NET:** New English Translation RE: Rotherham's Emphasized Bible

WT: Weymouth Translation *YLT*: Young's Literal Translation

Reference Sources

AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)

BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)

CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)

CKC: Concordant Keyword Concordance (Knoch)

CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance

(Bullinger)

CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)

FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger) SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

UR: Unsearchable Riches

VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance

Reference Notations

cf. – compare *e.g.* – for example et al. - and others

etc. – et cetera (and so on) ff. – and the following

i.e., – that is